

## VERMONT WORKING LANDS ENTERPRISE INITIATIVE

# The Vermont Solid Waste District Managers Association



Working to prepare for and implement Vermont's Universal Recycling Law, Act 148, the Vermont Solid Waste District Managers Association (VSWDMA) is providing comprehensive compost technical services to food scrap composters throughout the state. Consultants at the Highfields Center for Composting, contracted by VSWDMA, are actively working with farmers, schools, and composters in seven solid waste jurisdictions to design and develop food scrap recycling infrastructure, along with supporting operations, as they scale up to meet growing interest in food scrap diversion and local food systems.

Total Working Lands Grant—\$55,000.00

Total Match provided by the Managers Association —\$30,000.00

The Association received a Working Lands Service Provider Grant for \$55,000 from the Agency of Agriculture Food & Markets, and with matching support from the Agency of Natural Resources Solid Waste Program, USDA Rural Development, and VSWDMA, Highfields is working with eleven farms, three schools, and one commercial operation, in all four corners of Vermont and in between. Projects include diversified farms such as Hudak Farm in Swanton, Harlow Farm in Westminster, Tamerlane Farm an Organic Dairy in Lyndonville, schools in Barton, Lowell and Charlotte, and a non-profit farm at Hildene in Manchester, which is the estate of Abraham Lincoln's son.

"Technically, these composting projects are all very unique, but they share a common theme," said James McSweeney, the manager of Highfields' technical services department. "Whatever the site looks like, whatever the composted materials are, each partner we work with understands the importance of a closed loop food system. One project at a time, we are moving closer and closer that shared vision."



Paul Harlow stands in front of an old silage bunker at Harlow Farm's new tract of land in Putney

A major goal of the project is to help these operations plan for the composting infrastructure needs of their communities, which will support them in developing funding resources, community support, and sustainable farm based enterprises. After submitting compost site design recommendations with a grant application, Hildene received a \$50,000 grant from the Sarah K. de Coizart Article TENTH Perpetual Charitable Trust to build their composting system. The composting sites planned through the project to date would increase the state's food scrap recycling capacity by 24%, which is a significant conversion from waste to agricultural resource for Vermont.



Richard Hudak at his composting operation